

The Tadger Tales



Jane Shaw Ward

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THE TADGER TALES

BY

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FOREWORD

Considerable interest has been aroused as to the proper spelling of the name of the hero of these stories. The careful reader will note that there is no official spelling, that in the nature of things there could not be since if the name were written twice alike, both author and readers might forget to forget what he's spelled like—which would be quite fatal.

Since no authentic picture of the Tajar is available a species of near-Tager common to China where these tales are published has consented to pose on the cover in his place.

THE AUTHOR.

HOW THE TAJER GOT HIS TUCKS

Once upon a time there was a Tajer, and he lived in a Camp, and around a Camp, and over a Camp, and under a Camp, and through a Camp. All the places that there were in a Camp, he lived in.

But there were some Campers that came up to Camp; and when the Campers were in Camp, the Tajar stayed in his hiding place, which was somewhere between the bottom of a tree and the top of the sky. For if any of the Campers saw him once, they forgot what he looked like; but if any of them ever saw him twice they forgot to forget what he looked like—which would be quite fatal.

But one night, when the Campers were in Camp and the moonlight was bright, and the Tajar was filled with folly, he came out of his hiding-place, and he danced in the moonlight, and he danced and he danced, and one of the Campers saw him once, and the Chief Camper nearly saw him twice, and almost forgot to forget what he looked like.

But the Range Ranger, who ranged the ranges in that region, saw the Tajar dancing in the moonlight. Then he came across the ranges, and he stood in front of the Tajer, and he said,

“Tajer! Tajer!”

And the Tajer said, “Yes, sir!”

Then the Range Ranger said, “Tadger, Tadger, didn't you know that you were not allowed to come

out of your hiding-place when the Campers are in Camp?"

And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir."

And the Range Ranger said, "Go back to your hiding-place; and don't let me find you doing this again."

And the Tadger said, "Yes, sir," and went back to his hiding-place. Then the Range Ranger went away.

The next time the Campers were in Camp, the Tadger stayed in his hiding-place. And the next time after that he stayed in his hiding-place. But the next time after that the moonlight was so bright, and the Tajer was so filled with folly, that he came ~~down~~ from his hiding-place and danced in the moonlight, and he danced and danced, and one of the Campers saw him once, and the Chief Camper nearly saw him twice, and almost forgot to forget what he looked like.

But the Range Ranger who ranged the ranges in that region, saw the Tajer dancing in the moonlight, and he came across the ranges, and he stood in front of the Tadger, and he said,

"Tajer! Tajer!"

And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir!"

And the Range Ranger said, "Tajer! Tajer! don't you remember that I told you you were not allowed to dance in the moonlight when the Campers are in Camp?"

And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir."

Then the Range Ranger took the Tajer to the other side of the hill; and he sat down. And he took

out a needle and a long thread, and he put a tuck in the Tager's right front leg, and he put a tuck in the Tager's left front leg. But of course it was magic, and it didn't hurt.

Then the Range Ranger put the Tadger back in his hiding-place.

And he said, "Now your front legs are too short to reach, and you will have to stay in your hiding-place."

And sure enough, his front legs were too short to reach, and he couldn't get out by himself, and he had to stay in his hiding-place when the Campers were in Camp, no matter how filled with folly he might be.

HOW THE TAJAR TORE HIS TAIL

HOW THE TAJER TORE HIS TAIL

When the Campers went to town the Range Ranger, who really wasn't as mean as he seemed, used to put up a sort of ladder-thing, so that the Tajer could get in and out of his hiding-place, by himself, whenever he wanted to. And whenever the last Camper was half-way to the station, and just a little bit more, the Range Ranger put up the ladder-thing, and the Tajer could do as he liked.

And the first time after that when the Campers were gone, and the moonlight was bright, and the Tajer was filled with folly, he came down out of his hiding-place, and began to dance in the moonlight. First he tried dancing on all four feet, the way he used to; but his front legs were shorter than his hind legs, and it was all uneven and wobbly, and it made him sea-sick.

Then he tried dancing on his hind legs; but that made his knees ache.

Then he tried dancing on his front legs, but all the folly ran to his head, and it made his head ache.

Then he sat down on the ground, and put his head on his knees; and all he needed was a little sympathy to discourage him completely.

Then the Range Ranger, who ranged the ranges in that region, saw the Tadger sitting in the moonlight, and he came across the ranges and the Tadger heard him coming, and humped up his shoulders, all

the more discouraged. Then the Range Ranger stood in front of the Tadger, and he said,

"Tajer! Tajer!"

And the Tadger said, "Yes, sir!" very sad.

And the Range Ranger said, "Before I'd be so stupid as to have only one way of amusing myself!"

And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir," very indignant inside.

Then the Range Ranger went away; and the Tadger sat up and said to himself, "I'll show that old Range Ranger that I have lots of ways of amusing myself!"

Which was exactly what the Range Ranger expected.

Then the Tadger tried new ways of amusing himself. He thought and he thought. He thought of several ways, but they were not good enough. Finally he thought of a perfectly new way; and he said, "I know what I will do; I'll take Death-defying-life-leaps through the branches."

So he tried, and first he took them with his front feet, but he found the tucks began to rip. And then he tried with his hind feet, but he found he couldn't see where he was going, and besides, he needed his hind feet to push off with.

So then he said to himself, "I know what I will do; I'll take Death-defying-life-leaps with my tail."

And sure enough, that is what he did; he went swinging through the trees at a great rate, taking Death-defying-life-leaps with his tail, and found it most enjoyable. Presently he went swinging down

near the Camp, and he found that was a splendid place to play.

After a while, the Range Ranger came along, and saw the Tadger flying through the branches; and he said,

"Tadger! Tajer!"

And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir!"

The Range Ranger said, "Tadger, are you enjoying yourself?" And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir," very proud.

Then the Range Ranger said, "Take care you don't tear your tail on some of the branches near the Camp, where Kenneth, the tallest Camper, has put in the nails." And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir." Then the Range Ranger went away.

Then the Tadger thought he would try one of the branches near the Camp, but of course he wouldn't go near the nails, and he found a branch, and it was a fine branch, and he took a swing, and it was the best he'd ever taken. But there was a nail in the branch and his tail caught, and it tore a little, but the Tajer pretended not to notice.

The next time he was filled with folly, he came down and swung in the same place; and his tail tore a little bit more, but he pretended not to notice.

But the next time he thought he would try just once more and he took an extra long swing; and his tail caught, and his tail tore, and his tail tore off, and a piece of his tail fell down on the ground on one side of the branch; and the Tadger and the rest of the tail fell down on the ground on the other side of the branch. But of course it was magic, and it didn't hurt.

Then the Tاجر was much distressed, and he picked up the end of his tail and wondered how he could mend it.

First he tried with safety pins that he found around the camp; but they seemed to tear out. Then he tried with string, but that was too thin. Then he found some tape; and he wound it round and round, and he tied it on with string, and pinned it all with a safety pin; and he found that it stayed very nicely, and was as good as new.

But nevertheless, after that he was careful not to swing on the branches where Kenneth the tallest Camper had put in the nails.

THE TAJAR AND THE WITCH

THE TADGER AND THE WITCH

After the winter time came, and the Campers had all gone, a Witch came to the Camp. She looked about and she saw the Camp, and she knew it was exactly the kind of place she would like to spend the winter in. And she saw the old dead, bare tree; and she thought to herself, "That is exactly the kind of tree I like to live in in winter, because it is magic and keeps off the weather."

So the Witch started housekeeping in the old, dead tree. First of all she dusted very carefully. After that, she got out her tea things and made herself a cup of tea. Then she felt quite at home.

All this time the Tadger was watching her from behind a tree; but he didn't come very near for he was afraid she would see him twice and forget to forget what he looked like.

But presently, when the Witch was out gathering herbs, as all wise Witches do, and the moonlight was bright and the Tadger was filled with folly, he came out and danced in the moonlight and he danced and danced. And the Witch came back, and saw him dancing in the moonlight. She got one good look at him, and then the Tadger saw her, and he skipped away to his hiding-place, and she only saw him once.

Then the Witch said to herself, "That was a most unusual animal. I will go home and think about him." So she went home to her tree, and settled

down and began to think about the Tajer. She thought and she thought, but she couldn't remember what he looked like, and the more she thought about him, the less she could remember; and the more she thought the less she could remember; and she got terribly anxious and excited, and was afraid she was losing her memory. She worried about it dreadfully for a number of days. The Tadger was worried too, for now the Witch had seen him once, and if it happened again she would forget to forget what he looked like.

But one beautiful night the Witch forgot her troubles, and went sound asleep. And the moonlight was bright and the Tajer was filled with folly, and he came out of his hiding-place, and he crept up very quietly to make sure that the Witch was asleep. And then he danced in the moonlight. And he danced and he danced. He danced on his hind legs, and he danced on his fore legs, and finally he went and took Death-defying-life-leaps with his tail. Then the Witch woke up, and she saw the Tajer. She got another good, long look at him, and she forgot to forget what he looked like. Then she got down out of her tree, and she said, "Tajer! Tajer!" And the Tadger was terribly startled. And he said, "Yes sir!"

And the Witch said, "Yes, MA'AM, stupid."

And the Tajer said, "Yes, MA'AM."

And the Witch said, "Tajer, Tajer, now I know why I forgot what you looked like. You have given me a great deal of unnecessary worry; now I will give you a taste of your own medicine."

And the Tajar said, "Yes, sir—ma'am."

Then the Witch did a magic all around the Tajar, and she pinned a magic on the Tadar's back. "Now," she said, "you are quite invisible. You won't even be able to see yourself what you look like."

And sure enough, it was true; the Tajar was perfectly invisible. No one else could see him, and he could not see himself. He would not even have known he had tucks unless he felt of them.

At first the Tajar liked it, because he could come up behind the Witch and make her jump when she didn't know he was there. And he could get up close and catch the chipmunks, without their even knowing he was coming. And once he saw a bird going by in the air; and he jumped and caught that.

But still, after a while, he found that it was a nuisance, because he couldn't see his own legs, and when he was taking Death-defying-life-leaps, he was never sure that his tail had caught on the branch unless he felt of it, and this delayed him a good deal.

Besides no one ever spoke to him, and when he spoke to other people, they always jumped.

One day the Range Ranger came to Camp. He saw the Witch and he frowned, for Range Rangers don't like Witches. They say they infest the woods. Then he looked around for the Tajar, but he couldn't see him anywhere. Then he called the Witch.

He said, "Madam Witch! Madam Witch!"

And she said, "Yes."

He said, "Yes, SIR."

She was very angry, but she said, "Yes, sir," because everyone does what the Range Ranger says, sooner or later.

Then the Range Ranger said, "Madam Witch! Madam Witch! Where is the Tajer?" And the Witch said, "Oh, off in the woods somewhere!"

And the Range Ranger said, "Madam Witch! Madam Witch! Where is the Tajer?" And the Witch said, "How do I know? Off in the woods somewhere."

And the Range Ranger said the third time, "Madam Witch! Madam Witch! Where is the Tajer?" And he looked at her very hard. And the third time he said it, she started, and looked away; and he knew she knew more about it than she pretended to.

Then the Range Ranger went to the tree, and took up a large axe, and swung it over his head. And he said, "Madam Witch, are you fond of your tree?" And the Witch was very much excited, and she said to the Range Ranger, "Oh! Don't cut down my Tree; it is much the best I ever had; it keeps off the weather so!"

And the Range Ranger said, "Very well; where is the Tajer?" And the Witch said, "He is all right; call him."

And the Range Ranger put his hands to his mouth, and he called very loud, "Tajer! Tajer!" And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir!" right close beside them, and they both jumped.

Then the Witch leaned over and she unpinned the magic from the Tajer's back, and there he was between them.

And there was a twinkle in the Tajer's eye, because he knew the joke was on the Range Ranger.

And there was a twinkle in the Witch's eye, because she knew the joke was on the Range Ranger.

And there was a very small twinkle in the Range Ranger's eye, because he knew the joke was on himself.

Then the Range Ranger looked the Tajer all over carefully, and he said, "Tajer, Tajer, is your tail getting on all right?" And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir." Then the Range Ranger went away.

But the next time that the Range Ranger came to the Camp, he saw the Tajer and the Witch walking along arm in arm, the best of friends.

HOW THE TAJAR LEARNED
TO SWIM

HOW THE TADGER LEARNED TO SWIM

Once that winter there was a very bad storm. And the Witch's tree blew down and all the Witch's housekeeping things were scattered over the landscape. And the Tajer was very much excited. He jumped about and got in the way and watched the Witch pick things up.

But when the Witch began to pile things up neatly the Tajer looked at the piles, and he saw the high pile of wobbly tea-cups, and he said to himself, "I think it would be a good time for me to go and take Death-defying-life-leaps, a long way off." So the Tajer went and did Death-defying-life-leaps through the branches with his tail, and he took them a long way off.

And the Witch went, and she found a new tree, and she got all ready to move, and she said, "Tajer, Tajer, come and help me move."

But the Tajer didn't answer, so she said louder, "Tajer, Tajer! come help me move." But the Tajer didn't answer. Then the Witch was very indignant, and she did a swift and sudden magic, and the Tajer landed in front of her all out of breath and very much astonished.

Then the Witch said to the Tajer, "Just for that you have to help me move all afternoon." And she gave the Tajer a high pile of wobbly tea-cups just the way he thought she would, and he had to help

her all the afternoon long, and besides that, she was most disagreeable.

Then when the Witch was all moved, the Tajer said to himself, "I will get even with the Witch for making me work so hard all the afternoon." And the next time the Witch was away the Tajer thought of a fine plan, and he took the Witch's tea-cups, and he loosened the lower ends of their handles, and he taught them all to do Death-defying-life-leaps through the branches, by their handles. There was one cup that was a specially stylish cup and had two handles, and that one could do specially fine Death-defying-life-leaps. And after that, whenever the Witch was out gathering herbs, as all wise Witches do, the Tajer used to train the cups a little. And finally when he got them all thoroughly trained he started them all to doing Death-defying-life-leaps through the branches by their handles, just as the Witch was getting home.

Then when the Witch saw this going on she was much excited. First she laughed, and then she cried, and then she grew very indignant and quite hysterical. Then the Range Ranger who ranged the ranges in that region, saw that something was going on at the Camp, and he came across the ranges. And he came to the Camp, and the Witch saw him, and she said to him, "Oh, Mr. Range Ranger, look what the Tajer has done to my tea-cups!" And sure enough, there were all the tea-cups doing Death-defying-life-leaps.

Then the Range Ranger said, "Tajer, ~~will~~ would you teach the Witch's tea-cups to do Death-defying-life-leaps, through the branches, by their handles?"

And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir!"

Then the Range Ranger said, "Very well, discipline must be maintained. Just for that you can't go swimming for a week." Then the Range Ranger went away.

Then the Tajer thought to himself, "I don't think that's much of a punishment. I never went swimming." And the next day the Tadger thought, "I wonder what it would be like to go swimming!"

And the next day the Tajer went down to see if there was a place where you could go swimming, and there was a fine place. And the next day after that the Tajer went down to the creek and he went swimming. He swam and he swam, and his tucks felt queer, but he pretended not to notice, and he had a lovely time.

Then he came out, and he ran quickly up the hill, and he jumped into his hiding-place so the Witch wouldn't see how wet he was. But his tucks had shrunk, and he couldn't get down out of his hiding-place, once he had got up, because his front legs were too short, and wouldn't reach the ladder-thing.

And the next day the Range Ranger who ranged the ranges in that region came across the ranges, and he saw the Witch, but he didn't see the Tajer.

And he said, "Tajer, Tajer!"

And the Tajer, who was in his hiding-place, said, "Yes, sir!" And the Range Ranger said, "Tadger, Tadger, come here." And the Tadger said, "Yes, sir," but he didn't come.

Then the Range Ranger went to the Tajer's hiding-place, and he stood in front of the Tajer, and he said, "Tajer, Tajer, show me your tucks." And

the Tajer showed him his tucks, and they were all shrunk. And the Range Ranger said, "Tajer, have you been swimming?" And the Tajer said, "Yes, sir!" Then the Range Ranger said, "Very well, you went swimming when I told you not to, and you have shrunk your own tucks, and now you can't get down out of your hiding-place, and so you will have to stay there for a week."

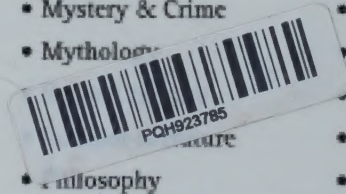
And sure enough, the Tajer had to stay in his hiding-place for a week. But after that the Range Ranger put another rung in the ladder-thing, so the Tajer could reach. And after that he went swimming whenever he wanted to.



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